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TRANSPORTATION: WE SHAPE IT AND IT SHAPES US

The theme of our luncheon today is transportation—we shape it and it shapes us. After the time I've spent on my job, I'm beginning to think shaping transportation is like streamlining an elephant—it's a tremendously big project to undertake.

At this Transpo, we're looking at the role of transportation, and the relevancy of that role, over the past 200 years of Kentucky's history. Each mode of transportation has helped shape our frontiers as civilization moved west. Each advancement in transportation matched an advancement in our standard of living and our accomplishments.

It seems but just a short while ago that the explosion of technology began. Even though we can see the value of trailblazing and can trace our progress from horseback to supersonic jets, many details are left in obscurity. We talked earlier in this conference about bid-letting—have you ever wondered when the first bid letting was held, or when we had our first change order? It seems now that we have evolved, we don't worry so much about change orders as we do about having plans on the construction project.

A few weeks ago, Jack Pattie, a local disc jockey, said on his radio program that the first road was paved in the United States in the summer of 1870. In the winter of 1870, the first salesman called wanting to sell

cold patch material for potholes. This makes you realize that although we've come a long way, we still have to patch the potholes all the time.

We owe an enormous number of people for getting us to where we are today—not only the famous pioneers like Daniel Boone, but the people who helped them. In order for him to get to where he was, somebody had to be cutting trees ahead of him; somebody had to help. And, I guess he did all of his measuring by laying a pole end to end. Those of you who studied surveying once upon a time in college (back when we did that sort of thing), know that we used to take land surveying measurements in poles. That evolved to measuring in feet and tenths of feet. Now we are starting to think about taking measurements in meters and millimeters. The transportation profession is seeing engineers taking the lead and making our system of planning, building, and maintaining highways a scientific art rather than guesswork.

The speakers at this forum for the last day-and-a-half have talked about different things—from Governor Breathitt discussing the system of parkways and how they developed to our people from FHWA talking about funding, and so forth. Rather than talk about systems, I'll concentrate more on people—especially the people involved in transportation who got it to where it is today and are keeping it where it is and are looking forward to where it is going.

Nobody can devalue the impact that the engineering profession has had on the progress of transportation in the last 50 years or so. The touch of the professional engineer can be felt in every area in our lives—and it will be a powerful force for many years to come. We always need more engineers. No longer is civil engineering a glamorous profession. Many of our young people look to the things that are exciting. (I started in college in electrical engineering, but it didn't take me long to understand that I couldn't see electrons running around in wires like I could see bridges being built. I changed over to civil engineering.) Not only do we have professionals, we have a lot of people in support groups. People who are in what might seem like thankless jobs, or those who might seem insignificant but, in the larger picture, they have to be involved in order for us to be where we are.

As our transportation system evolved over the years, we've seen the auto industry grow, traffic grow, speeds increase and, somewhere along the way, we had our first traffic accident. And, somewhere along the way, we had our first traffic fatality. Now, the people who were blazing the path for the early pioneers had to face something they hadn't thought about—safety concerns, speed laws, laws about taxes, weight limits, and on and on. As one challenge was taken care of, ten others jumped up in its place.

The need for engineers became enormous because things were growing at such a rapid rate. We can trace the shift and focus from just getting people somewhere to having to move them efficiently, economically, quickly, aesthetically, and so forth. This sort of thing promoted the need for more and more of an engineering staff. I'm very fortunate to have the people with whom I work—and I'm very proud of the people involved in the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. They have been part of a rich tradition, a tradition of people like Cy Layson and many others who have devoted their lives to this work. In the short time that I've been there, I've found their expertise to be tremendous. I think that we have progressed well through the years, even though there have been a lot of jobs that were boring. There are people who still have to drive centerline stakes and bluetops in order for us to have a transportation system. When you go home in the evenings and look back at what you did during the day, you may not think that you've made a big contribution, but every small part works into the big picture.

As we reach the middle of this conference, we begin looking ahead and thinking about what will happen in the next 200 years. Well, certainly we won't be here to see it, but we can pass the torch to the next generation.

We've heard quite a bit about the new ISTEA legislation. This is the reflection in the mirror of where we are now. When we talk about metropolitan problems like air quality and traffic congestion and noise pollution, we are seeing what is coming in our mobile society—too many people going too many places and usually trying to get there too fast. Technology and people are reaching a confrontation and, at times, it seems like an impasse.

I'll tell you how far things have come since I started in transportation 33 years ago. We heard the discussion about the MPO or Metropolitan Planning Organization. Well, when I was starting in transportation, MPO still meant "making a path to the outhouse." There are so many new things to learn about in transportation: there are trucks talking to weigh stations, computer-operated weigh stations that are able to weigh moving vehicles, vehicles talking to other vehicles. Before long, the driver may just become a nuisance. I hope it doesn't ever go that far, but you can see that just as our pioneer brothers and sisters had a lot of challenges facing them, we do also. We wonder who is going to take the lead in this. Will it be our transportation engineers or some yet unknown profession that will be created to meet the demands of tomorrow? We spend a lot of time talking about the future but, before we get there, we have to cope with today.

By the nature of our business, transportation is always in a state of change. If you are in a business, you know that you have to keep changing; if you are not moving ahead, you are sliding back and, before long, you are out of business. This is the same thing in which we are involved. We see a lot of frowns when we talk about changing to the metric system

by 1996. (Certainly, I am one of them; for my generation, it would be hard to change to something new.) For years, we transportation professionals reacted to the things taking place around us: we reacted to the types of automobiles being built in Detroit, we reacted to bridges that failed, and other things that took place. Transportation was not necessarily in the lead, but following the lead of others. We can't sit back and simply react to what happens around us. It's been said that there are three kinds of people: those who watch what happens, those who make things happen, and those who say "What happened?" We certainly want to be number two—we want to make things happen and take the responsibility to lead the way.

Transportation doesn't stand alone. Economic development, ecological concerns, labor, education, countless other segments of our lives are dependent upon transportation. If an area is inaccessible to anything but a four-wheel-drive vehicle, you can be sure there are not going to be many factories or shopping malls being built there. If you can't get to work over a good road, odds are you're going to leave that area. But, rather than helping, you'll be leaving your problems behind for somebody else. Unfortunately, we still have many areas in Kentucky with this problem—an out-migration of people because we can't provide the jobs that are needed. The world is on the move and it is our responsibility to get it there as safely and as quickly as possible.

Kentucky is a large state with very diverse problems. One afternoon last week, I was in a meeting about the highly technical computerized weigh stations on I-75. An hour later, I fielded a phone call from a woman in Marion County who was terribly worried because one of the bridges she travels on her way home has been closed and the other one has a four-ton load limit (with a 10-ton garbage truck going over it every week). So, you can see, it's a very diverse state and we have to look at the problems from one end to the other. When you have areas where people are still worrying about what to do when the creek gets over the road and they can't get out, it's hard to spend all your time on the innovative and technical challenges that are coming up.

One of my favorite sayings is that we need to act and not react, that we must keep planning ahead, because shaping transportation is more than simply designing programs and doing a computer analysis. The whole system is built upon individual building blocks and these building blocks are made up of people. What we do depends on people. In the 33 years that I have worked in transportation, I've learned that there are probably two kinds of people—those who are winners and those who are losers. And, it has been said that the real difference in people is energy—having a strong will, a purpose, and determination can accomplish almost anything. This is the difference between the two kinds of people: a winner says, "Let's find out," while a loser says, "Nobody knows." When a winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong," and when a loser makes a mis-

take, he says, "It wasn't my fault." A winner goes through a problem; a loser goes around it and never gets past it. A winner knows what to fight for and what to compromise on; a loser compromises on what he shouldn't, and fights for what isn't worth fighting for. A winner says "I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be." A loser says, "I'm not as bad as a lot of people." A winner listens; a loser waits until it is his time to talk. A winner would rather be admired than liked—although he would prefer both; a loser would rather be liked than admired. A winner respects those who are superior to him and tries to learn from them; a loser resents those who are superior and tries to find chinks in their personality. A winner explains while a loser explains away. A winner feels responsible for more than his job; a loser says, "I only work here." A winner says, "There ought to be a better way to do it"; a loser says, "That's the way it's always been done here."

As we look ahead in transportation, we have a choice. We can't look at the way it's always been done here—we always have to shape it or it will begin to shape us. Thank you. ■